

### Statement from UC Berkeley on Talks with “Occupy the Farm”

On Thursday evening representatives from UC Berkeley and the group engaged in the occupation of agricultural research fields on the Gill Tract met to discuss the possibility of a peaceful resolution to the protest.

While our conversation was a frank and forthright exchange of information and perspectives, an agreement has yet to be reached that would allow for the desired peaceful and voluntary end to the tent city that remains in place. Representatives from the occupation group indicated that they would need to convey the substance of the discussion to the other members of the encampment, and that any agreement would need to be supported by 100% of the participants.

During the discussion Keith Gilles, Dean of the College of Natural Resources, emphasized that by the middle of May college staff need to begin work on the tract in support of faculty and student research, and that this requires that full control of the property revert to the university. He also emphasized that these complicated projects require meticulous supervision and cannot be carried out in the midst of an encampment. At the same time, we reiterated that if the encampment is voluntarily disbanded, we will commit to include occupation participants in a broad-based discussion about the continuation of urban farming under university supervision on a portion of the tract, as well as any future discussions about the long-term future of the property.

Also discussed was the value and principle of academic freedom that allows faculty members at UC Berkeley to pursue their educational and research interests without interference. During Wednesday’s Spring Divisional meeting of UC Berkeley’s Academic Senate, the chairperson, Prof. Bob Jacobsen, noted that faculty research had been “usurped” by the protesters’ unilateral actions and stated that, “If there is no way to reach a win-win resolution, then I believe that the faculty’s freedom to do their planned research must be supported as a key principle. As a faculty, I think we must stand by this.”

We are now waiting for the occupiers’ response to our offer to participate in a broad-based community dialogue if they agree to end their encampment. Today, in a letter to their attorney, campus counsel outlined the process for the proposed community dialogue that would be led by the College of Natural Resources, and requested a response no later than Saturday night, May 5th.

If they decide not to peacefully end their illegal occupation of the agricultural research field and refuse the offer to subsequently participate in the formulation of a plan for continued urban farming under university supervision and control, we have every intention of honoring our commitment to ensure the research activities are not impeded, and the rule of law is maintained.

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